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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON THE UNITED NATIONS IRAQ-KUWAIT OBSERVATION MISSION

(24 September 1998-23 March 1999)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report provides an account of developments and activities in respect of the mandate entrusted to the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission (UNIKOM), in accordance with Security Council resolutions 687 (1991) of 3 April 1991, 689 (1991) of 9 April 1991 and 806 (1993) of 5 February 1993. It covers the period from 24 September 1998 to 23 March 1999.

II. DEVELOPMENTS IN THE DEMILITARIZED ZONE

2. The situation in the demilitarized zone remained generally calm. However, the air attacks against Iraqi targets by the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in December and the subsequent skirmishes over the "no-fly" zones affected some operational aspects of the mission. On 14 November 1998 the Combined Air Operations Centre of the coalition forces advised UNIKOM to suspend all flights in the mission area until further notice. The flights were resumed on 16 November after planned air strikes against Iraq were called off. Flights of UNIKOM fixed-wing aircraft in Iraq were suspended again in connection with United States/United Kingdom air attacks from 16 to 19 December. On 22 December, the Iraqi authorities informed UNIKOM that they could not guarantee the safety of flights, owing to the conflict with the United States and the United Kingdom regarding the "no-fly" zones. The flights of the fixed-wing aircraft have therefore remained suspended. For the same reason, helicopter flights in the demilitarized zone were suspended on 22 December; they were resumed on 7 January 1999 on the Kuwaiti side only. As a precaution, military observers from the United Kingdom and the United States were redeployed on 17 December from patrol and observation bases in Iraq to bases on the Kuwaiti side of the demilitarized zone.

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* Reissued for technical reasons.

3. On 4 January 1999, the Iraqi authorities requested UNIKOM to withdraw from Iraqi territory by 14 January all personnel of United States and United Kingdom nationality. In response, the United Nations informed the Iraqi authorities of the precautions already taken. As for United Kingdom and United States nationals assigned to UNIKOM headquarters in Umm Qasr, the United Nations stated that it relied on the Iraqi authorities to take all necessary measures to ensure the security of the headquarters and the personnel in it.

4. The number of violations in the demilitarized zone increased from 67 during the previous reporting period to 122. Air violations almost doubled from 46 to 82, most of them by unidentified aircraft flying at high altitude. On five occasions, the aircraft were identified as being of a type used by the coalition forces (F-18 jet aircraft and Gazelle and Apache helicopters).

5. On 17 December 1998 and 25 January 1999, High Speed Anti-Radiation Missiles (HARM) impacted in the demilitarized zone. Debris from the first missile was discovered near a fuel storage facility about 12 kilometres north-west of Umm Qasr. Parts of the second missile were found on the Kuwaiti side of the demilitarized zone some 4.5 kilometres from UNIKOM headquarters.

6. There were 37 ground violations. Twelve were by Iraqi policemen and civilians using the only hard-surface road along the border, which meanders in and out of Kuwaiti and Iraqi territory. Three were by Iraqi men who were returned to Iraq. There were four instances of military personnel being in the demilitarized zone, two in Iraq and two in Kuwait. On four occasions a prohibited rifle was seen being carried by Iraqi personnel. Fourteen firings of small arms were heard: 11 in Iraq and 3 in Kuwait.

7. A maritime violation occurred on the Kuwaiti side of the demilitarized zone when an Iraqi dhow in the Khawr 'Abd Allah strayed into Kuwaiti waters and ran aground. It was towed off by two Iraqi boats.

8. UNIKOM received four official complaints, all from the Kuwaiti side. Two concerned ground violations and two concerned weapons violations. None could be verified because of the time lag between the alleged incident and receipt of the complaint.

9. One hundred and forty-one ships docked at the port in Umm Qasr under the "oil-for-food" programme. Their cargo consisted mainly of wheat, sugar, rice, black tea, powder detergent, soya beans, animal fodder and ghee.

10. Kuwait carried out some repair work on sections of the road which runs parallel to its electric fence. No new construction was undertaken on the fence, which still has a gap of several kilometres near the border with Saudi Arabia. Oil drilling activity at the Al Ratqah oil field on the Kuwaiti side of the demilitarized zone increased significantly. On the Iraqi side, oil drilling resumed in February after prolonged interruptions due to lack of spare parts.

11. UNIKOM provided security and logistic support for meetings of the Technical Subcommittee on Military and Civilian Missing Prisoners of War and Mortal Remains held on 21 October and 2 December 1998 in the demilitarized zone under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The

thirty-seventh session of the Committee, which was scheduled for 4 January 1999, was cancelled owing to the Iraqi delegation's refusal to participate following the hostilities of December 1998. Other humanitarian activities of ICRC are ongoing, including mail exchanges across the border. ICRC representatives from Kuwait and Iraq met at UNIKOM headquarters on 20 February 1999 to discuss arrangements for the repatriation of an Iraqi national from Kuwait. The repatriation took place on 21 February 1999 at the Abdaly crossing point south of Safwan. On 8 March, the mortal remains of an Iraqi soldier were handed over at the same crossing point.

12. UNIKOM continued to maintain close and regular liaison with the authorities of both Iraq and Kuwait at various levels, including visits by the Force Commander to the two capitals and through the UNIKOM liaison offices in Baghdad and Kuwait City. Both the Kuwaiti and Iraqi Governments cooperated with the mission in the conduct of its operations.

III. ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

13. As of March 1999, the overall strength of UNIKOM was 1,311, consisting of the following components:

(a) A total of 194 military observers, from Argentina (4), Austria (6), Bangladesh (5), Canada (5), China (11), Denmark (6), Fiji (5), Finland (6), France (11), Ghana (6), Greece (4), Hungary (5), India (5), Indonesia (5), Ireland (5), Italy (5), Kenya (4), Malaysia (6), Nigeria (5), Pakistan (6), Poland (5), Romania (6), the Russian Federation (11), Senegal (5), Singapore (6), Sweden (5), Thailand (5), Turkey (7), the United Kingdom (11), the United States (11), Uruguay (5) and Venezuela (2);

(b) An infantry battalion of 775 from Bangladesh;

(c) An engineering unit of 50 from Argentina;

(d) A logistic unit of 34 from Argentina;

(e) A helicopter unit of 35 from Bangladesh;

(f) A medical unit of 14 from Germany;

(g) A total of 208 civilian staff, of whom 61 were recruited internationally.

Major General Esa Tarvainen (Finland) continued as Force Commander.

IV. FINANCIAL ASPECTS

14. The General Assembly, in its resolution 52/238 of 26 June 1998, appropriated $52,143,800 gross for the maintenance of UNIKOM for the period from 1 July 1998 to 30 June 1999, subject to review by the Security Council with regard to the question of termination or continuation of the Mission. Two

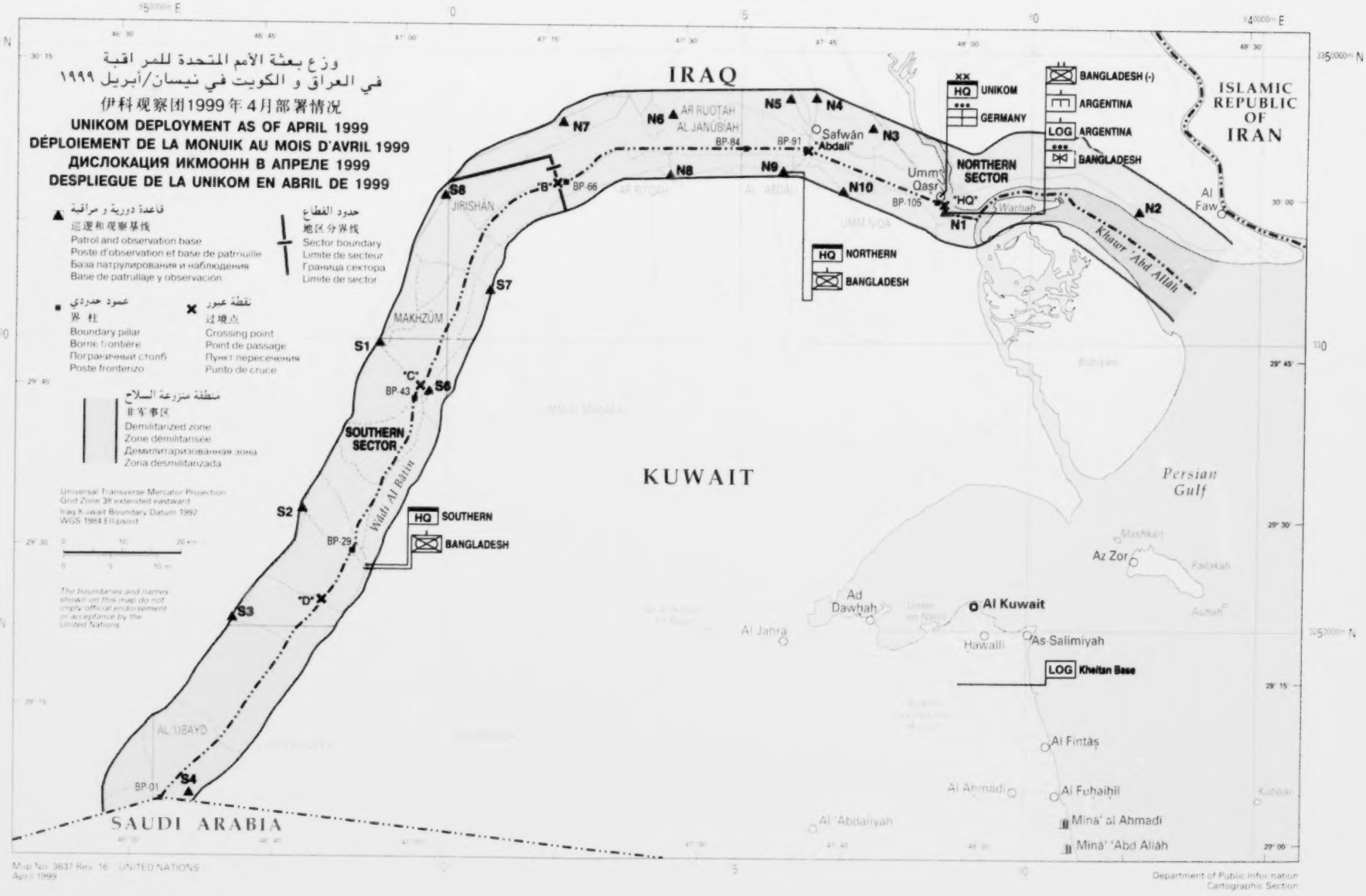
thirds of the cost of the Mission, equivalent to $33.5 million, is to be funded through voluntary contributions from the Government of Kuwait. Assessments on Member States have been made for the period ending 30 April 1999. The Government of Kuwait has paid its voluntary contributions in full through 30 June 1998 and an additional amount of $5.7 million has been paid through 30 April 1999.

15. As at 28 February 1999, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for UNIKOM since the inception of the Mission through 30 April 1999 amounted to $13.2 million, representing some 5 per cent of the assessment for the Mission. The unpaid assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations amounted to $1.7 billion.

V. OBSERVATIONS

16. During the period under review, the situation along the border remained generally quiet. UNIKOM was not significantly affected by the air operations by the United Kingdom and the United States in the southern "no-fly" zone in Iraq, except for the suspension of its fixed-wing aircraft flights and the restriction of the helicopters to the Kuwaiti side of the demilitarized zone. UNIKOM continued to carry out its tasks, thereby contributing to the maintenance of calm and stability along the border. In this it continued to receive the cooperation of the Iraqi and Kuwaiti authorities. Consequently, I recommend that the Mission be maintained.

17. In conclusion, I wish to pay tribute to Major General Tarvainen and the men and women under his command for the manner in which they have discharged their responsibilities. Their discipline and bearing have been of a high order, reflecting credit on themselves, on their countries and on the United Nations.



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